

Spare Parts

Mammary Lane



ur treatment of women remains incomplete. While rummaging about through love's attic you'll find the greatest assortment of odds and ends since the Olde Curiosity Shoppe: Nicely shaped **jugs** (early 20thC), hand-crafted **love handles** and **knockers** (both 20thC), a **pair of (Cupid's) kettledrums** (c. 1770–1850), some restful **chest and bedding** (c. 1785, nautical) and, for the autoerotic set, a pair of **headlights** (20thC). All neatly arranged on a **rack** (1990s).

Upon closer examination, you'll see that this mixed bag from the past consists of nothing more than **breasts**. If it seems like **breasts** have been around forever, you're not far off. They bounced their way into the language about the year 1000, coming from the Indo-European *bhreus*, "to well or sprout," starting life as an Old English *breast* and a Middle English *brist* before finally settling in to the form we know today.

But it's the **bosom**, a word that appeared about the same time that's proven more acceptable. According to its ancient Indo-European origins, the **bosom's** nothing more than the space between the arms. Nothing much, but you'd have to admit that it filled the space nicely. Around the middle of the nineteenth-century, **breasts** fell out of favor, and "nice" people stopped referring to them. When you were invited out for turkey dinner and you wanted to express your preference for white meat, you always asked for turkey **bosom**, never the **breast**.

Over time, the **breast** came to be perceived as increasingly impolite to the point of being considered savage, and the **bosom** as refined and gentle. **Bosoms** had a brief, wild fling as **bazooms** (mid 20thC), before ultimately reverting to their conservative character and traditional spelling.

As acceptance of **breasts** declined, other substitutes were tried,

The woman's breast nourishes the child and gladdens the father.

—The Koran



Drebin: "Lt. Frank Drebin of the Police Squad."

Monique: "Is this some kind of bust?"

Drebin: "Very impressive, but we need to ask you some questions."

—Naked Gun 2-1/2, The Smell of Fear

1991